

WASHINGTON – Today, Rep. Earl Blumenauer, a senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee, released the following statement regarding the South Korea, Panama and Colombia Free Trade Agreements:

“The Korea and Panama Free Trade Agreements represent a constructive development for America’s economy, and particularly for Oregon. Across the state, businesses will see increased sales abroad of machinery, technology, and agricultural products – sales that will in turn lead to increased activity at our ports. Beef exports from Oregon will increase, helping Oregon’s farmers and ranchers, and services ranging from engineering and design to the legal sector will see increased demand. The South Korea and Panama Free Trade Agreements mean jobs for Oregonians.

“Some people have complained this process took too long, but I commend this administration and my colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee for not rushing to approve trade deals that weren’t good enough for American businesses and workers. Dramatic improvements have been made, including adding core labor and environmental protections and remedying blatant unfairness towards American automobile sales in South Korea. Indeed, the South Korea Free Trade Agreement is now supported by the association representing American workers who make cars.

“In total, these agreements represent a step forward, but there is more that can be done. We need to redouble our efforts to ensure the benefits of trade are more widely distributed across our economy, and that rules are enforced. I’ve been encouraged by the renewed commitment to use the rules of international trade to enforce fairness: I was pleased the Senate has acted on Chinese currency manipulation, and that the administration’s decision to impose tariffs on illegal Chinese activity in the tire market was sustained by the World Trade Organization. I look forward to helping ensure a continued focus on appropriate trade enforcement. As our state’s economy has grown more interlinked with the rest of the world, our best efforts are required to ensure we achieve the promise of international trade.

As Congress advances international trade opportunities for our firms, it has an opportunity to ensure that American workers can also compete. Since 1962, trade adjustment assistance has helped workers respond to the continual changes in our economy. In 2009, Democrats expanded the program to insure service workers, doubling the size of the program. The expansion of the program appropriately reflects the challenges trade poses to our service economy, and continues our commitment to the manufacturing sector. The extension of the

program passed by Congress yesterday will help American workers continue to compete in a globalizing economy.

“I continue to have reservations about the Colombia Free Trade Agreement and voted against its passage. The agreement fails to support the laudable commitments made by both countries in the Action Plan for Labor. That agreement could mark a watershed moment in Colombia labor rights, but it will require diligent enforcement by both nations to ensure its effective implementation. Including that commitment in the text of the agreement would have helped carry out those promises. I am also greatly concerned with the prospects for smaller farmers in Colombia. The U.S. heavily subsidizes certain crops and I am concerned that the agreement does not do enough to ensure that Colombian farmers are not driven from the Colombian market, further destabilizing the Colombian countryside.”